

## WATER/WASTEWATER FACILITIES COMMISSION COMMISSION MINUTES

October 8, 2014

A meeting of the City of Fitchburg Water / Wastewater Commission was held on October 8, 2014 at the JA Provincial Building, 1200 Rindge Rd, Fitchburg, MA.

The meeting commenced at 4:45 p.m.

Members present: Lenny Laakso, Commissioner DPW  
Rick Healey  
George Siener  
Michael McLaughlin

Members Absent: Ron Lubianez  
Carol Brown

Others present: Denis Meunier, Deputy Commissioner Water  
Jeff Murawski, Deputy Commissioner Wastewater  
Mary Jane Franklin

### **ITEM # 1: Approval of last meetings minutes:**

The minutes for the September 10, 2014 meeting were approved by unanimous vote.

### **ITEM # 2: Public Forum:**

No forum comments were received.

### **ITEM # 3: Discussion on Rate Study:**

Mr. Meunier presented a proposal from Tighe & Bond to perform a rate study for the Water Department. In addition, Tighe & Bond offered an alternative proposal to conduct a combined rate study for both the Water and Wastewater Department. The study will give a five year outlook of rate structures and possible alternatives to rate increases in Fitchburg. If both studies are combined Tighe & Bond will provide a discount. Mr. Meunier commented that one specific scope of work that he would like included in the proposal, is language or emphasis on industry standards for capitol improvement and infrastructure replacement across the country. There was a discussion on the rate structure of surrounding communities and of using Tighe and Bond as a resource in gathering this information as they do a yearly rate survey of Massachusetts. It was stressed that, although having information regarding the amounts other communities pay for water/sewer was important, the most essential objective of the study would be to determine what Fitchburg's rates need to be to maintain the infrastructure.

Mr. Meunier provided, a requested, a summary of the age of the water mains in the City. He reminded the Commission that there are 187 miles of water main in Fitchburg. Twenty-two miles (11%) of that are one hundred years or older, forty-five miles (24%) are between seventy-five and ninety-nine years old and sixty-one miles (32.8%) are between fifty and seventy-four years old. He stated the average life expectancy of a water main is fifty to one hundred years.

Mr. Murawski explained that after the completion of the current sewer separation project there will be an evaluation by EPA/DEP to determine the effectiveness of the projects on the Nashua River water quality.

Upon completion of that evaluation, a decision will be made to determine if more projects are needed. Mr. Laakso questioned if it would be beneficial to wait until after that evaluation to have a rate study done for Wastewater. After some discussion, it was decided to wait until after the evaluation when there is further information before having a rate study done for Wastewater.

**ITEM # 4: Update the Commission on the status of Wastewater projects:**

Mr. Murawski explained that approximately 55% of the contract days of CSS4D are complete with 45% of the contract fees remaining.

Mr. Murawski reported that a revised conceptual methodology has been approved by the Conservation Commission for the consent decree mandated supplemental environmental project to stabilize a portion of brook bank at Falulah Brook at Coolidge Park. This project was bid publically and awarded to Tighe and Bond. He anticipates obtaining approval for the order of conditions at the Conservation Committee meeting this month. He hopes to have all permitting and the final design complete and to bid the project in the winter so that the construction contract can be awarded and the work done in the dry months.

Mr. Murawski explained that the ability to obtain financing for the rehab/rebuilding of the East Plant secondary system was encountering some difficulty as the Plant is contained within the 100 year flood plain. There are questions as to whether the City has sufficient flood insurance to cover the plant and the related infrastructure. This problem may delay the project. Wright Pierce is working on for a letter of map revision to petition FEMA to change the flood map lowering the 100 year flood elevation.

A second component of the amendment deals with Wright Pierce assisting Fitchburg in obtaining flood insurance at the Plant. Per previous conversations with Joe Jordan, former Deputy Commissioner of Wastewater, and Wright Pierce it appears there is not enough existing flood coverage. Mr. Murawski will meet with Dick Sarasin, City Solicitor, to discuss exactly what flood protection the Plant has through MIIA.

After determining that the secondary system plant upgrade is considered a Chapter 149 “building” construction, or “vertical” construction project. A third component of the contract amendment deals with the preapproval of contractors and subcontractors and soliciting RFP proposals for the services of an Owners Project Manager which are required steps in the Chapter 149 process. Mr. Murawski reported the proposals have been received and he is awaiting the mayor to assign a review selection committee.

The Notice of Award has not yet been issued for the flow meters which is mandated by the consent decree. The meters must be installed in the collection system and will help in the development, calibration and verification of the Hydraulic Model.

**ITEM # 5: Follow up Discussion with the Commission on the matter of Paper Mills Billing:**

Mr. Meunier explained that after doing some research, he discovered documentation that Fibermark’s case had been settled after filing for bankruptcy in 2008 and as a result, absolving their debt with Fitchburg.

Mr. Murawski presented the Commission with a spread sheet comparing the sewer rate for the mills vs. the rate for the general public. There was a lengthy discussion on strategies to determine what a fair rate for the mills would be and how to approach any negotiations with the mills.

Mr. Murawski will calculate the exact cost associated with conveying and treating the paper waste flow.

It was agreed that the mills should be billed monthly instead of quarterly, as they currently are.

**ITEM # 11: Other Business:**

Mr. Murawski will provide schedule updates for all ongoing projects to the Commission.

Mr. Murawski reported that there was a release of styrene from an industrial user in Westminster to the sewer system. The chemical release resulted in a one day effluent ammonia violation at the East Wastewater Plant requiring notification to EPA/DEP.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 10, 2014 at 4:30 pm at the JA Provincial Building, 1200 Rindge Rd, Fitchburg, MA.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM

Minutes Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Jane Franklin